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UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

مركز دراسات الشرق الأوسط

والدراسات الإسلامية

CENTRE FOR MIDDLE EASTERN  
AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

The  
National Ideology  
of the  
Radical Algerians  
and the  
Formation of the FLN  
1924-1954

by

Salah El Din El Zein El Tayeb



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The views and interpretations in this paper are those  
of the author and should not be attributed to the Centre  
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of Durham.

This work is dedicated to Fatima, my mother, to Salwa, my wife, and  
to Israa, my daughter.

Salah El Tayeb  
1986

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This monograph demonstrates that there is a valid distinction between the activities of a movement and the sentiments and attitudes which are embodied in its programmes. This means that there is also a distinction between the study of the national ideology and of the nationalist movement in any country. A nationalist ideology has a programme, usually the creation, sometimes the strengthening, of the state. One can distinguish between such an ideology and patriotism on this basis. Patriotism need not have a programme.

In reference to the distinction between the national ideology and the nationalist movement, Smith<sup>1</sup> indicates that, "Typologies of nationalism can themselves be subdivided into those which take the ideology of nationalism as their main referent, those which take the type of nation or national group and those which refer to the nationalist movement." Although this distinction between ideology, group and movement is not always carried through in practice, yet it serves as a convenient way of perceiving the main differences in my approach to the study of the Algerian national ideology.<sup>2</sup> It is believed that national ideology remains a powerful social force and an important focus of investigation in its own right. It should not be confused with nationalism as a movement because every movement creates an ideology, which is the thought of that movement. The national ideology outlines the radical changes which the movement seeks to bring about. In examining the national ideology of the radical Algerians, the essential concern is with the evolution of national ideology as distinct from the historical period under investigation, 1924 - 1954. The focus is on their ideas and programmes that supported national renaissance and the restoration of nationhood and were directed primarily towards decolonization and absolute sovereignty.

The Algerian nationalist press is a crucial source for studying their national ideology - the principal concern being the editorial content, ideological discussions and the nature of appeal. In addition to this source of primary information, I have also relied on the original documents of their different political parties, their pamphlets, declarations, political speeches and the resolutions of the parties' congresses. All these sources of information constituted a vital element in the study of the national ideology of the radical Algerians.

### Notes

1. Smith, 1973, 22
2. See El Tayeb, in press

## 2. FRENCH ALGERIA

In 1830 Algeria became a French colony. It was considered part of French territory and an important part of metropolitan France. In 1930, the French administration in Algeria believed that L'Algérie Française had become a reality after one hundred years of occupation. The celebrations held by the French administration in 1930 antagonized the indigenous Algerians and gave new impetus to their nationalist feelings. The consequence of this was that the Algerian nationalists started demanding more concessions from the French administration within the French colonial system.

The situation on the ground in Algeria had further alienated the radical Algerians. They were basically concerned with the inequality in economic and social life that existed between the Colons and the natives in Algeria. The colonial economy which the Colons established in Algeria was characterized by their monopoly of all the economic activities in the country. Because of the limited chances of employment in Algeria, many Algerian workers emigrated to France. The conflict between the natives and the Colons in Algeria was inevitable since the Colons were absolutely determined not to make any concessions to the natives.

Despite the fact that France was ejected unceremoniously from the Middle East, defeated militarily in Indochina and threatened throughout Black Africa, it decided to keep Algeria French. The fundamental question in regard to the rise of the Algerian national ideology was whether Algeria was Algerian or French. This issue gave rise to three distinct political groups in Algeria, namely the Europeanized Algerians, the Algerian 'Ulama and the radical Algerians. It is important to note that all these political groups were reformists before the Second World War. They accepted the sovereignty of France over Algeria, but French colonial policy and the Pieds-Noirs' intransigence forced them to abandon their reformist ideologies after the Second World War.

The assimilationist viewpoint was represented by the Europeanized Algerians such as Farhat Abbas.<sup>1</sup> They wanted Algeria to become French and they wanted the Algerians to be assimilated into French culture. The most clear and elaborate statement about spiritual assimilation was made by Farhat Abbas,<sup>2</sup> who denied the existence of the Algerian nation. He stated that, if he had discovered the Algerian nation, he would be a nationalist and he would not blush for it as though for a crime. However, he indicated that we could not die for the Algerian fatherland because it did not exist. He asserted that the doctrine of assimilation in which they believed was part of the reality of life and they were more concerned with the emancipation of the Algerians and the bettering of their social and economic situation.<sup>3</sup>

The systematic or disguised refusal of French colonialism to allow the Muslim Algerians into the French community had encouraged, reluctant though they were, all those who favoured a policy of assimilation to repudiate it and become nationalists. The Europeanized Algerians tended to recognize the differences between the Algerians and the French after they had been deprived of French citizenship and it became difficult for them to be assimilated into French culture. In the Algerian Constituent Assembly, Farhat declared that he had discovered the Algerian nation which he could not discern among the Algerian masses in 1936.<sup>4</sup> He maintained that Algeria had its own personality, character and countenance, which it would like to preserve despite the will of metropolitan France. The epoch of assimilation for them was over.

The Algerian 'Ulama made it very clear that Algeria was not France, could not be France and did not want to be France. They were very much aware and conscious of the remarkable differences between Algeria and France. These differences included Islam as a religion and Arabic as a language and culture. The Algerian 'Ulama wanted to preserve the identity of the Algerian nation and the integrity of the Algerian personality within the colonial system. The impact of the religious renaissance of the Algerian 'Ulama and their social and cultural revivalism was that it crystallised al-Jinsiya al-Qaumiya (The national identity). The term was coined by Ibn Badis, who believed that nations differed from each other in regard to their fundamental characteristics and attributes, which included language, religion, history and the common feelings and memories of the members of the same nation. Since the 'Ulama believed that no nation could survive without the survival of its fundamental characteristics and attributes, al-Jinsiya al-Qaumiya would represent, in this respect, the solid foundation of the Algerian nation vis-à-vis French Algeria. The most crucial aspects of it were the preservation of the Algerian personality by the struggle against naturalization; the consolidation of the Algerian nation by rejecting the idea of French Algeria, the prevention of marriage with French women and the recommendation of family emigration and, finally, by countering the "Berber Policy" which the French had tried to develop in Algeria in the late nineteenth century. The efforts of the Algerian 'Ulama resulted in the abrogation of "l'Algérie: c'est la France."

It is significant to note that even the radical nationalists were reformists before Second World War. Their political reformism was expressed by their leader, Messali Hadj, when he declared: "we are not asking for independence. We do not want to throw the French into the sea. We know very well we cannot get along without them. If they wished to leave we would keep them by force."<sup>5</sup> In spite of this moderate attitude, the French Government dissolved his party, Parti du Peuple Algérien (PPA) and imprisoned him. After the war, they abandoned this reformism and demanded independence for Algeria - the consequences of failure would often be that demands increased and new means of action were sought. The radical Algerians inspired the Algerian masses to direct action against French colonialism. Revolution needs the work of political activists and the mobilization of the masses, not towards a separate identity within the colonial system but towards the total rejection of the colonial system itself. It is obvious that significant historical events can have a profound influence in altering beliefs and values and may produce sets of attitudes that are hard to change with later experience. Significant events of this nature in Algeria were the failure of the Muslim Congress in 1936, the repression of the 1945 uprising and the failure of the ballot system in 1948. In reaction to the failure of ideas for assimilation, and for an autonomous Algeria federated to France, a more militant group of revolutionaries concluded that force alone would bring independence. They were convinced that violent revolution was inevitable for the emancipation of Algeria from French colonialism. The radical Algerians believed that ideology is very important to revolutions. It defines the objectives and aspirations of the revolutionaries, stimulates the revolutionaries to action and legitimizes the cause of revolution. Hence, they started to discuss the ideological principles of the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (MTLD) and to focus on the critique of radical nationalism. It is not my intention to exaggerate the role of ideas. The significance of the diffusion of revolutionary populism in Algeria was that it tapped a potential which was already there. It was similar to adding



oil to fire. Violent revolution could not be achieved through the diffusion of ideology only. It needs weapons, trained soldiers and an efficient organization. In order to achieve these goals, the revolutionary populists proceeded to form the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) in 1954.

#### Notes

1. For a detailed study of this political group see El Tayeb, 1986, 206
2. See Abbas, 1936
3. Abbas, 1962, 154
4. Declaration made before the Constituent Assembly, 23 August 1946
5. Préfecture d'Oran, CIE, 1941a, 24

### 3. EMIGRANT WORKERS AND EXILE NATIONALISM

The first Algerian nationalist organization was established in France rather than in Algeria. The Etoile Nord-Africaine (ENA) was founded in the region around Paris (Ile de France) in 1924 by the North African emigrant workers in France. In this respect Wilfred Knapp indicated that, "The Etoile Nord-Africaine was the creation of Hadj Ali Abdel Kader, who became known as Messali Hadj".<sup>1</sup> Since the Etoile relied on the support of the emigrant workers, it could be considered as a true representation of exile nationalism. This highlights the view that nationalism was often born in exile, for the exile feels most deeply the meaning and value of a territory which his compatriots, who reside in it, ignore. From the outset, the Etoile was more radical in doctrine and tactics than any other Algerian political movement which existed in that period (1924-1937). It demanded independence for North Africa from the start and resorted to agitation and propaganda to further this goal.<sup>2</sup> In France, Algerian nationalists could speak and write more freely on all themes, including political ones. Algerian Muslim frustrations were seeking an outlet somewhere and, when they could not find one at home, they erupted in France.

The North African emigrants were influenced by the ideas prevailing in Europe in the late 1920s and early 1930s and setting the pace in Paris: the ideas of fascism, of para-military ex-servicemen's leagues, and of corporatism. By the middle 1920s the troubles of the new democratic states were already developing into constitutional and political crises in which nazism, fascism, communism, and authoritarian regimes, based on or backed by the armed forces, were much in vogue. The environment in which the Etoile operated made it different from the other Algerian political groups. At the same time the customs, traditions and Islamic values of the emigrants encouraged them to retain their own identity. As a result, the Etoile existed as a separate political group in Paris and the North African emigrants were not assimilated into French society. These factors had contributed in shaping the attitudes of the Etoile in two respects:

- (i) The broad vision of the basic issue, which was absolute liberation from foreign domination in the political, economic and cultural spheres.
- (ii) The choice of the workers as a crucial revolutionary force while the other political groups such as the Europeanized Algerians or the Algerian Ulama relied on the educated elites and the merchants.

With the establishment of the ENA, Algerian nationalism took on its first institutional form capable of attracting the attention of the Algerian masses. Nevertheless, the ENA was not a well-structured party. In this regard Jean-Louis Carlier stated that, "The proper characteristics of Algerian emigration, its fluidity, transience and its psycho-cultural configuration would not permit the construction of a solid movement and a well organized party."<sup>3</sup> An examination of the origins of the ENA will throw some light on the movement's orientation and its ideological directions.

#### Marxist Roots of the ENA

El-Quemmah stated that the Etoile was first established as a religious society in 1925 and became a political party in 1926.<sup>4</sup> This point of view emphasized the nationalist dimension of the ENA. On the other hand, the

secret police reports and Akli Banoun suggested that the ENA was established by the French Communist Party. In 'Note sur l'Etoile Nord-Africaine', the police report stated that, "The Association of the 'Etoile Nord-Africaine' was founded in Paris in 1926 by Hadj Ali Abdel Kader who was of Algerian origin. At that epoch, Hadj Ali was a member of the Central Committee of the PCF and the head of a communist cell in France. The centre of the Association was established in 'Maison Commune', 49, rue de Bretagne."<sup>5</sup> Akli Banoun stated to Kéranish that in reality the ENA gave total allegiance to the French Communist Party which guided its first steps against colonial oppression and imperialism.<sup>6</sup> Banoun emphasized that the ENA was established as an answer to the French Communist Party's difficulties in penetrating the one hundred thousand-strong North African (mostly Algerian) labour force in France. Article Ten of the ENA statutes (adopted in 1928) maintained that "the association does not recommend any party or political line", but adds "nevertheless, it will call for the help of those parties which will support the (ENA) programme and give help towards the achievement of (its) objectives." Indeed, for all its efforts to maintain a façade of independence, the ENA made no secret of its sympathy for the Communists. The French Communist Party was concerned with the liberation of the people, the struggle against imperialism and the independence of Algeria. The fact that some of the leaders of the ENA used to write in the press of the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) would indicate the relationship of alliance between the two parties. According to J. L. Carlier, Hadj Ali used to write in Le Paris from as early as 1924. The Algerian Communists of the ENA used to write in Bairaq, Léva Ahmar (al-Léva al-Ahmar), Alm ('Alam al-Ahmar) and Raia Hamra (al-Raya al-Hamra). (Bairaq, Léva, Alm and Raya are all Arabic names which mean flag. Ahmar is an adjective and means red. All these papers were called 'The Red Flag'. The colour red had its significance in being associated with the Communists.) In 1927 Raia Hamra indicated that, by acquiring the most fertile land, French colonialism had forced the indigenous Algerians to live in misery. The headline of the paper carried the slogan 'A bas la colonisation. Vive l'Indépendance de l'Algérie'. Bairaq proclaimed, in its issue of March 1927, that the Algerians wanted their independence. It demanded the abolition of the French protectorate in Tunisia and the evacuation of French troops from Morocco.<sup>8</sup> The writings in the 'Red Flags' reflected the opinions of the Communists of the ENA and the Algerian members of the colonial section of the Communist party. In 1926, when the ENA was established, le Paris, Alm and l'Humanité launched a systematic and violent campaign for the independence of Algeria. Shadali Makki summarized this political line in the following words: "To carry through the struggle for independence to the very end within the context of revolutionary nationalism."<sup>9</sup> Class struggle did not disappear from the demands of the ENA communists, but it was not the principal preoccupation of the Association. At the same time, the communist faction of the ENA gave an important place to nationalism in so far as it acted as a catalyst for the immediate aspirations of the emigrants. Shadali stated that the position of the Communist direction of the ENA was that "The socialist revolution is the only measure to surmount nationalism since nationalism is the inverse reflection of the colonial ideology. The agrarian question should occupy a central position in the national struggle against French colonialism."<sup>10</sup> What was the ideological significance of the roots of the Etoile? The answer to this question would help to explain the direction of the Etoile and the factors which influenced the shaping of its ideology. It was clear that the Etoile embodied both nationalists and communists, and it was

influenced by these two political trends. Early contacts with French Communists seemed to have taught Messali the usefulness of organization among workers and the creation of political cells. Although Messali had never been a member of the Communist party, nevertheless he was greatly influenced by the Communists' techniques and organization.<sup>11</sup>

M. Kinanish told the author that he specifically asked Messali the following question, "Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" and Messali replied, "Never." Messali also told Kinanish that he had been approached to join the Communist party but had refused. The budding Algerian nationalism of the ENA was expressed in terms limited by a Marxist frame of reference. The charter of the ENA (as laid down in 1928) was not loose, as in a typical front organization, but a replica of the CP model governed by the same principles of cellular structure, sectionalization, selective recruiting, active membership, democratic centralism and strict control on implementation of policy at all levels.<sup>12</sup> In the Chapter setting out the programme, emphasis was put on national liberation rather than on social revolution, and the former was presented through the prism of the Leninist view of imperialism and decolonization. French imperialism was the main enemy, an independent Algerian Parliament was demanded and it was the large European landholdings in Algeria that the ENA particularly sought to break up. Speaking in Brussels in 1927, Messali said that the ENA wanted the confiscation of large agricultural landholdings that had been seized by "feudalists, agents of imperialism, colons and private capitalist societies", and the return of confiscated land to the peasants from whom it had been taken; the integrity of small and medium-sized landholdings; the return to Algeria of land and forests that had been seized by the French state; and the expansion of agricultural credit to small Muslim landholders.<sup>13</sup> The Communists' own agrarian programme at this time was not very different. The Communist demands were:

- (i) expropriation of large holdings in all forms;
- (ii) the grant of certain rights to small landholders, e.g. exoneration from taxes, the return of communal and inherited property that had been confiscated, free provision of agricultural equipment and the elimination of middlemen;
- (iii) the transfer of land to those who worked it with elimination of both cash rentals and share cropping, both of the traditional and other kinds; and
- (iv) an eight hour work day for agricultural workers.<sup>14</sup>

The programme for Algeria went far beyond standard demands of Algerian spokesmen (abolition of Code de l'Indigénat, equality of military service with the pièdes-noirs, freedom of press and association, etc.)<sup>15</sup> Independence for Algeria was launched as the main battle-cry. It was perhaps the most seminal contribution of communism to Algerian nationalism to transmit to it, through the vehicle of the ENA, the doctrine of independence as a primary goal and an Algerian parliament as the decisive stage towards its achievement. The ENA would be the sole propagator of this gospel for a long time, not only in their period of dependence on the CP, but for a decade after their break with it. Even the Ulama who stressed the uniqueness of Algerian identity were still shy of giving it political expression, and asked in 1936 for direct attachment to France. In promoting this new, nationalist line, however, the French Communist party seems to have unleashed forces it could not control. For a number of people in the ENA gave themselves to the nationalist theme with an enthusiasm that quickly escaped Communist confines. Already in 1929 the ENA was breaking with the PCF because a majority of its members wanted to

base their programme on Algerian nationalism. Other than the general aim of independence, the early militants of the ENA had only a vague doctrine which was concerned with agitation and propaganda.

#### The ENA Programme

The ENA could be analyzed as an ideological movement with a political character. The base of the movement consisted of an emigrant proletariat, as has been indicated above. The Marxist rhetoric and the sentiment of nationalism formed the principal aspects of its programme. In reference to the dominant aspect of ENA politics, Carlier stated that "the political practice of the ENA was oriented towards agitation. The activism of its members reflected their extraordinary energy and the stubbornness of their will."<sup>16</sup> The professed aim of the ENA was "to defend the material, moral and social interests of North African Muslims, and to educate its members."<sup>17</sup> What this meant for Muslims in Algeria was a programme of social, economic and, to some extent, political emancipation. Algeria had been reduced to slavery, ENA orators affirmed, and Muslims had been subjected to a multitude of abuses. The ENA sought to eliminate discrimination against Muslims and to gain for them the social, economic and political rights of their European counterparts. Specifically, it called for the elimination of the Code de l'Indigénat, the development of free and compulsory education for Muslim children, the representation of Muslim Algerians in Parliament, and the raising of Muslim salaries.<sup>18</sup> The "Young Algerians" seemed to have demanded these concessions long before the ENA. In all of these respects the ENA demands stressed the immediate, material conditions of Muslim Algerian life. They particularly concentrated on urban Muslims, in Algeria and in France. In the 1924-1926 period, then, the Etoile's programme was a limited one. It was limited, first, to pushing for immediate changes, and this was consistent with the fact that the left-leaning Cartel des Gauches was in power in Paris at the time, and the French Communists may have thought they could pressure it into making reforms on behalf of Algerian Muslims. Second, the programme was limited to Muslims in urban areas, which was consistent with the Marxist frame of reference of those who controlled the ENA. As early as May 1926, statutes were passed which stipulated that the fundamental aim of the association was the struggle for the total independence of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, and the unity of North Africa.<sup>19</sup> At that time also, it appeared, the organization came out for the formation in Algeria of a national revolutionary government with a constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage, and the return to Algeria of all lands, forests, and other property taken by the French.<sup>20</sup> Then, at a meeting in early 1927, Hadj Ali Abdel Kader called for independence.<sup>21</sup> The following month, Messali attended the Anti-Imperialist Congress in Brussels where he elaborated a "Cahier of Algerian demands". The ENA speakers began at this time to refer to Algeria as "a Muslim nation provisionally annexed to France". Not long after, Shadali wrote an article in l'Ikdam entitled, "Our single objective: National Independence, supreme hope and supreme salvation (salut)", which asserted that the ENA had "clearly decided to carry on to the end the struggle for independence, in the context of revolutionary nationalism,"<sup>22</sup> an action that brought about his expulsion from France and the prohibition of the ENA paper. These measures were taken against the Etoile for what French authorities called "an attack on the integrity of national territory", that is, opposing French authority over Algeria.



The Etoile realized the importance of a programme which was well defined and adapted to the circumstances, so it decided to launch, in addition to its initial doctrine, a claim for the total independence of North Africa and a programme of social and economic demands which could be realized immediately. On the initiative of Messali Hadj, the French political parties of the Left, especially the French Communist Party, supported and defended the demands. On May 28, 1933, under the presidency of Messali Hadj, the General Assembly of the ENA signed unanimously the ENA programme.

This programme set out three main demands which were included in the second section of the programme.

- (i) The total independence of Algeria.
- (ii) The complete withdrawal of French troops.
- (iii) The formation of a national army.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, the programme also demanded the confiscation of land, banks, mines, railroads, ports and public services seized by the French. The Etoile was seeking a national revolutionary government with a constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage, with universal suffrage to prevail at all levels and all inhabitants of Algeria to be eligible for all assemblies.<sup>24</sup> Other demands set out on this occasion were for more advanced organization of irrigation, the development of means of communication and non-reimbursement of government aid to the victims of periodic famines. The ENA wanted the elimination not only of the Code de l'indigénat, but also of all measures of exception. It wanted also amnesty for all those imprisoned, under special surveillance, or exiled for infraction of the indigénat or for political reasons. It wanted absolute freedom to travel abroad. Furthermore, the ENA programme included the following demands:

- (i) Freedom of the press, of association and congregation, and the right to join political organizations and trade unions.
- (ii) Replacement of the financial delegations by a national Algerian Parliament elected by universal suffrage.
- (iii) Elimination of the mixed communes and military territories, and the establishment in these areas of municipal assemblies elected by universal suffrage.
- (iv) Accession of all Algerians to public responsibilities without any distinction, according to the principle of equal responsibility, equal treatment.
- (v) Compulsory instruction in Arabic, access for Muslims to education at all levels, the creation of new Arabic schools, all official acts to be simultaneously published in Arabic and French.
- (vi) With regard to military service, respect for the Qur'anic text which says: 'He who deliberately kills a Muslim is condemned to Hell for eternity and deserves the anger and damnation of God.'
- (vii) Application of social and work laws to Muslims, the right to unemployment aid for Algerian families and family allowances.

These latter demands were included in the first section of the ENA programme.<sup>25</sup> The ENA programme of 1933 was not totally new. It was clear that some of the ideas included in the programme had appeared already, such as accession of all Algerians to public responsibilities, compulsory instruction in Arabic and application of social and work laws to Muslims. Nevertheless, the programme had emphasized three crucial ideas related to patriotism, socialism and Arabism. In regard to patriotism, the programme demanded total independence for Algeria, the recall of French troops and

the formation of a national army. In connection with socialism, it demanded the control of all properties by the Algerian state, with the confiscation of large properties and the return of these lands to the peasants. In reference to Arabism, it demanded compulsory free education at all levels in Arabic, creation of new Arabic schools and the printing of official documents in both Arabic and French. It was important to note that the programme ignored the separation of religion (Islam) from the state (France) and the liberty to teach Islamic religion in the schools and mosques. These two issues were strongly emphasized by the Algerian 'Ulama.

At this stage the ENA was concerned primarily with the question of independence for Algeria. In June 1933, for example, Imache declared that Algerians wanted independence "pure and simple".<sup>26</sup> In November he asserted that "the work of the Etoile Nord-Africaine will be fulfilled the day that the French of Algeria are thrown into the sea"<sup>27</sup>, a phrase that would be picked up by others and that would haunt the ENA for years afterwards. The following spring, Jean Renaud reported on "the abominable meeting" held by Messali on April 28th "against the French who gave him hospitality." He spoke of the unimaginable spectacle of 600 unleashed Muslims. "They speak of nothing less, in effect, than of cutting the throats of the first passers-by if and when Messali Hadj gives them the order. (They) vow to refuse military service and to preach desertion to Algerian soldiers ... facing a green flag at the back, they called for an immediate sacred war ... cries of 'Death to France!', 'Burn the capital!', 'Soldiers desert!', 'Throw the French from Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco!', 'Let's take their land, push them into the sea!', 'Long live the revolution El-Oummah will bring to Islam'."<sup>28</sup> This virulent anti-French direction was coupled with what Al Ashraf has called "A sentimental and nostalgic Algerianism," which Messali, in particular, did much to foster.<sup>29</sup> "We are not comparable with the Senegalese", Messali said on one occasion, "but noblemen born of noblemen."<sup>30</sup> It seemed that Messali wanted to emphasize that, if the Senegalese were submissive to French colonialism, the Algerians would not tolerate it.

#### Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism

As the ENA embraced nationalism, its leaders felt the need to find a new frame of reference for the party programme. They found it in a combination of Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism. The shift could not be separated from the fact that the ENA was just then beginning to seek a base in Algeria. A Pan-Arab outlook was just the thing to arouse hope in the poor, uneducated, powerless Muslims the ENA sought to recruit. Arabhood was proclaimed to be a common denominator of the Maghrib as a whole. An institutionalized expression of this was given in article eight of March 1928, where the ENA was defined as an Arab organization and an association of the majority of the oppressed populations of North Africa. At the same time, it was promised that ethnic traditions and mores of the minority would be respected. This was all the more significant as most of the ENA adherents were Kabyles who constituted the majority of Algerian and Maghribi migration. It was with the national and cultural sense, not the ethnic sense, that Arabhood was endowed in order not to stir up the hostility of the Kabyles and their particularistic identity. A reliance on Islam would also give the ENA programme a legitimacy in Muslim Algerian eyes that its previous Marxist underpinnings had not. For this reason, the second theme of the Etoile's propaganda was Islam. The organization was also defined as an "Association of Muslims."<sup>31</sup>

Through the influence of the Pan-Arabist Shakib Arslan, Messali had been alert to the cultural-religious theme and he adopted a more Islamic form of Algerian nationalism. Messali returned from exile in Switzerland in a new guise: in the burnous, slippers, cap and beard of a Muslim religious leader. He came as a spiritual guide, or marabout, conveying to Algerians the wisdom of Shakib Arslan and the Muslim reformers.<sup>32</sup> Appeals to Pan-Arab sentiment and to Muslim religious ties became common in Messali's speeches then. "France had plunged Algerians into ignorance of their own religion" he said in 1933.<sup>33</sup> "It has infected North Africa with thousands of missionaries, who have tried to christianize its people." Fortunately, however, "inspired by an ardent faith, the Arab people possess an indestructible moral force. They will never bend before material force."<sup>34</sup> He acclaimed Muslims for having remained faithful to their religion because God would have no mercy on those who moved toward Christians even in adopting unimportant customs.<sup>35</sup> He condemned Muslims who had renounced their rights under Qur'anic law to become French citizens as "renegades from Islam."

Like the Ulama, the ENA leaders sought recognition from the French that Algerians had their own cultural and religious identity and they asked that they should be put on an equal footing with the French. Within the ENA, Messali began to urge members to follow the faith more closely. At a cultural evening in mid-1935, he encouraged participants to give up gambling, drink and quarrels and to study Islamic history. Through education, he said, Islam would awaken, and heroes would be born who would revive the kingdom of the Prophet.<sup>36</sup> Party members were also required to swear allegiance to the party on the Qur'an. It was true that Messali was influenced by Shakib Arslan in regard to Arabism and Islamism to the extent that Shakib became very fond of him and he used to call Messali 'my son'. The author has seen some private letters from Shakib Arslan to Ahmad Kinnanish. In one of these letters, Shakib wrote to Kinnanish, "If all the youth became like my son (the reference is to Messali Hadj) Islam would have been liberated a long time ago." Nevertheless, this shift was not primarily due to the influence of Shakib Arslan. From the above evidence, which was drawn from police reports, it was obvious that Messali started talking about Arabism and Islam even before he met Shakib Arslan. The shift was conditioned by the fact that the ENA was beginning to seek a base in Algeria. It took off from Muslim reformism, which held that the Arab peoples of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean could free themselves of colonial control only if they freed their spirits of maraboutism and other deviant Islamic practices which encouraged ignorance and apathy and deprived Muslims of the vitality inherent in Islam. El-Qumrah spelt out the new development rather bluntly: "The Algerians did not wait for the founding of the Third International in order to resist (French) inroads into Algeria ... We (i.e. the ENA) receive neither orders nor instructions from anybody or any party whatsoever." Rather ominously for future communist control, the organ dubbed ENA members as "Islamic nationalists" and not "revolutionary nationalists", as in the hitherto used cant.<sup>37</sup> It was important to note that it was on the pretext of "religious deviationism" that the PCF turned away from the Etoile in 1934 and formed an independent PCA (Algerian Communist Party).<sup>38</sup>

#### ENA's Reformism

The accession to power in France of a government formed of all the parties of the Left raised great hopes in France and in its colonies. The



president of the Council, Leon Blum, consented to abrogate the dissolution of the ENA. Once pardoned, Messali returned to Paris and participated with forty thousand North Africans in the procession of 14 July, 1936. The dominant slogans of the procession were: "liberate North Africa, liberate Syria and liberate the colonized countries in the Arab world." In line with the new changes in France, a delegation which represented the ENA in Algeria, the Comité de Défense des Libérés (CDL) in Tunisia and the Comité de Défense des Intérêts Marocains (CDI) in Morocco presented a cabinet of demands to the Popular Front Government in February 1936. The delegation demanded that the Government should renounce the politics of the privileged race which inspired all the legislation and administrative organization in the colonies. In the interest of the population of all North Africa they demanded the abolition of all the special laws and all the measures of exception which included the *statut de protectorat* in Morocco, the *code de l'indigénat* and the *statut de protectorat* in Algeria, and all the *statuts particuliers* in Tunisia. The delegation was concerned with safeguarding the North African personality and the sovereignty of the people by creating in each North African country a representative assembly elected by universal suffrage. It also demanded the repatriation of powers in the traditional French sense. In conclusion, the delegation stated that "French colonial policies do not respond to the expectations of the colonized people. If the different French Governments have committed serious errors in this respect, it was expected that French Government of the Left would accept the challenge and correct them. The North Africans were concerned with their moral and material advancement." At that time, another ENA delegation went to see the French Under-Secretary for the Interior in charge of Algerian affairs. They handed him two *cahiers de doléances*: one concerned the immediate demands for Algeria itself and the other concerned the demands of the Algerians who lived in France. The second included: application of social laws to Muslims, elimination of surveillance of North Africans, freedom to choose Muslim first names for their children and admission of Muslims into hospitals near their domiciles rather than in the special Franco-Muslim facility in Bobigny. The demands on behalf of Muslims in Algeria were concerned with the application of democratic liberties such as freedom of the press, trade unions and liberty of thought. The remarkable feature of these two programmes was that they were very reformist in comparison with the 1933 programme. Neither of them demanded total independence for Algeria, Morocco, or Tunisia; the formation of a national army or the creation of a sovereign state. The two programmes had also ignored the withdrawal of foreign troops and the confiscation of large properties and the return of these lands to the peasants. The basic reason behind this might have been that these programmes were presented to a Government formed of all the parties of the Left. The ENA had some confidence in this Government and thought that it would help to emancipate North Africa. This assumption proved to be an error and the demands of the two programmes were rejected by the Government. Not only this, but the French Government also dissolved the ENA on January 25, 1937. What astonished the militant nationalists of the ENA was the fact that their party was dissolved by a popular French Government which laid claim to the principles of liberty and democracy. This convinced the North African nationalists that French colonialism was always the same, irrespective of the political complexion of the party in power. The rejection of the reformist demands pushed the nationalists towards extremes in that they proceeded to reject legal and legitimate

methods, and to believe in total independence and absolute sovereignty instead of demanding some concessions within the colonial system.

#### The Etoile's Agitation for Independence

Despite the obvious reformism of the two above-mentioned programmes, Messali Hadj had agitated for the independence of Algeria. Speaking in Algiers in August 1936, he criticized the resolutions which had been passed by the Muslim Congress and especially the one which called for the attachment "pure and simple" of Algeria to France. It was on this point in particular that Messali differed from all the other Algerian leaders and groups of the period. In this regard, Messali emphasized that the attachment of Algeria to France had been the result of a brutal conquest and he wondered how the participants in the Muslim Congress could dare to demand the attachment of Algeria to France and ask the Algerians to accept this attachment voluntarily. In this respect, Messali emphasized that "We will never accept that our country is attached to another country against its will. We do not want, under any pretext, to mortgage the future, the hope of national liberty of the Algerian people."<sup>42</sup> The journal El-Oummah published the speech of Messali in a special issue which was distributed all over Algiers. When the Charter of demands of the Muslim Congress was presented, Messali criticized it on the grounds that: "A people who ask to be assimilated to another people break the link that attaches them to God. They break also with their history, with their ancestors, and with their prosperity."<sup>43</sup> Messali was also opposed to parliamentary representation, the financial delegations and the Governor-General. He demanded the creation of an Algerian Parliament elected by universal suffrage and without distinction of race or religion. It was at this point that, scooping up a handful of soil, Messali proclaimed it was not for sale.<sup>44</sup> His speech at that time was very significant because it was directly opposed to the reformism of the Muslim Congress. It aroused the national consciousness of the Algerian masses who listened to it in the municipal stadium of Algiers. M. Kinanish, who was there at the time of the speech, told the author that the Algerian masses had vigorously applauded the speech of Messali and some of the audience were shouting slogans demanding the independence of Algeria.<sup>45</sup> No significant and crucial measures were taken to secure the independence of Algeria and the activities of Messali were confined to rhetorical speeches. Nevertheless, he was able to influence some of the Algerians and make them reject the ideas of assimilation and naturalization. The nationalist hymn, composed by M. Zakariya in 1936, reflected this influence and affirmed that:

We do not want naturalization  
We do not want assimilation  
Whoever prefers (such) tortuous paths  
Will be stoned by us like Satan...  
Forward, let us take the straight road...  
Forward to Independence. Forward to Liberty.<sup>46</sup>

The cry of independence, according to Kinanish, drew to Messali many new followers. Kinanish noted that there was an increase in the membership of the ENA but he failed to provide the author with any record of members. He thought that the Algerians supported Messali because he was planting the Algerian national idea in the Algerian soil. Moreover, he argued that Messali was offering emancipation to the Algerians while the other Algerian political leaders were in favour of either assimilation or the attachment of Algeria to France. It was true that Messali was more radical at that

time in his demands in comparison with the other Algerian political leaders. Although he limited his offer of emancipation to the rhetorical level, yet M. Guérin was justified in referring to him as "the pioneer of the Algerian national idea."<sup>47</sup>

#### Critique of the ENA Programme

The basic feature of the ENA programme was the communist rhetoric which influenced it at first. This was due to the infiltration of the ENA by some of the Algerian Communists. The ENA Communists wanted the socialist revolution to rise above nationalism, but they encouraged nationalism because they believed that it was the inverse reflection of the colonial ideology. It was the PCF which pushed the members of the ENA into an anti-colonialist stance in the first place. By doing so, they had unleashed forces which they could not control. The crystallized nationalism of the ENA embraced some cultural and religious themes. The cahier of "immediate demands" to the Blum Government included the separation of church and state. The religious dimension of the ENA made Messali appear as a messiah, offering Algerians not only a national identity but also a cultural-religious one. Most of the demands presented by the ENA concerned the three North African countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. The frame of reference of the ENA was not only limited to Algeria but extended to North Africa. Despite the rhetorical agitation of Messali for independence, the programme was reformist and it demanded in most cases some concessions within the colonial system. In this regard, the 1936 programme was more reformist than the 1933 one. The agitation for independence did not go beyond planting the national idea in Algeria. Messali had played a major role in this direction when, speaking in 1935, he affirmed that "We want once again to be masters of our country. It was taken from us by force at a time when the right of peoples to dispose of themselves did not exist. Today we must reclaim this right for the peoples of Islam."<sup>48</sup> Examination of the speeches of Messali, as can be seen, indicates that he was like a coin in which you find on one side the agitator and on the other the reformer. This was not surprising, since reformism was dominant at that time amongst the different Algerian political attitudes.

#### Notes

1. Knapp, 1977, 73. It is important to note that Hadj Ali Abdel Kader and Messali Hadj were two different personalities while Wilfred Knapp thought that the two names referred to one person.
2. Interview with Messali Hadj by Ahmad Kinanish, see Kinanish, 1972.
3. Carlier, 1972, 951.
4. This thesis was supported by Ahmad Kinanish.
5. Secret Note, Préfecture d'Oran, CIE, 1936d, 1.
6. See "le récit de M. Akli Banoun" in Bouayed, 1974, 33.
7. Goldzeiguer, 1969, 31-44.
8. Bairaq, special issue March 1927, quoted in Carlier, 1972, 953.
9. Rais Hamra, February 1927, ibid., 955.
10. Shadali Makki, ibid., 960.
11. Interview with Ahmad Kinanish by the writer on 7th July 1976.
12. L'Ikdam, no 3, September 1927.

13. Cahier of Algerian demands presented by Messali Hadj to the Anti-Imperialist Congress in Brussels, February 1927
14. *La Lutte Sociale*, special edition, April 1925
15. Circular dated 12.4.27, quoted in *L'Evolution Nord-Africaine*, 29.4.27
16. Carlier, 1972, 952
17. See the Statute of l'Union Nationale des Musulmans Nord-Africaine
18. A. Haddou in *L'Ikdam*, February 5, 1926
19. *Le Crt du Peuple Algérien*, no 2, November 1962
20. *Ibid.*
21. Meeting of January 20, 1927 in the Police Report, p.276, January 31, 1927
22. Altamer, n.d., 16
23. *L'Algérie Libre*, 11 March 1950; the programme was also published in *Comité de l'Afrique Française*, 1933, 576
24. MTD; Commission Centrale d'Information et de Documentation, 1951, 27
25. *L'Algérie Libre*, 11 March 1950
26. Speech of June 16, 1933 in the Police Report January 31, 1934, 6
27. *Préfecture de Police*, 1934, 67-68
28. *L'Ami du Peuple*, May 17, 1934
29. Al Ashraf, 1963, 195
30. Quoted by Altamer, n.d., 37
31. *El-Oumma*, August-September 1935
32. Daniel Guérin had described the change, see Guérin, 1956, 14-15
33. Speech of November 18, 1933
34. Speech before the ENA General Assembly, May 1933 in *Préfecture de Police*, 1934, 59-60
35. Speech of June 12, 1933 in the Police Report, June 12, 1933
36. Police Report August 6, 1935
37. *Cahiers du Bolchevisme*, May 1932, 74
38. *Torrelli*, 1932, 110
39. Plan de revendications immédiates pour l'Afrique du Nord, présenté au "Front Populaire" par l'Etoile Nord-Africaine. Le Comité de Défense des Libertés en Tunisie et le Comité de Défense des Intérêts Marocains en février 1936 in *El-Oumma*, no 41, July-August 1936
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Préfecture d'Oran: Centre d'Information et d'Etudes* 31 août 1936. The demands were also published in *El-Oumma*, no 41, July-August 1936
42. Discours prononcé par Messali Hadj au meeting du 2 août 1936 au stade municipal d'Alger, *El-Oumma*, no 37, January-February 1936
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. Regarding the speech of Messali and its impact on his audience, see Kaddache, 1970, 303ff
46. Comité de l'Afrique Française, 1937, 29-31
47. Guérin, 1970
48. *Préfecture de Police*, 1934, 67



#### 4. MILITANT NATIONALISM FROM THE ENA TO THE PPA

In March 1937, the Parti du Peuple Algérien (PPA) was formed by Messali Hadj to replace the ENA which had been dissolved by the French popular government in 1937.

The PPA was supposed to organize the activities of the Algerian people against French colonialism and lead them towards the independence of Algeria. Messali announced the event to militants gathered in Nanterre with these words: "Dear brothers, Mubarek Filali and I have gone today, March 11, 1937, to the prefecture of police to declare the creation of the PPA. This is a great event which will undoubtedly have a strong response in Algeria. A child has just been born. I place it under the protection of God and of the Algerian patriots. May God protect it and may it be the messenger of independence for Algeria."<sup>1</sup> At the inaugural meeting on March 11, the party leaders announced that the PPA envisaged the transformation of the financial delegations and the acquisition by Muslims of certain rights equal to those of Europeans. The name and aim of the party were suggestive: the Party of the Algerian People signified that its action would be limited to the problems which were purely Algerian despite the fact that it supported the struggle which was carried on by the nationalist parties in Morocco and Tunisia. It was working for the moral, social and material improvement of the Algerians. The declaration of the political bureau published by El-Oummah on April 10, 1937 was very explicit on this point. It indicated that "The PPA is concerned with the immediate task of struggling for the betterment of the Algerians and to explain the public point of view on the Algerian problem and its just solution."<sup>2</sup> Did the PPA defend the political and economic programme of the ENA in its official declarations and leading articles which were published in El-Oummah and le Parlement Algérien?<sup>3</sup> Did it also maintain the ENA reformism and continue to demand concessions within the colonial system? or did it become revolutionary in means and goals in the sense that it demanded total independence, and absolute sovereignty and adopted violent means to achieve these goals? The answer to these questions requires the examination of the PPA official declarations.<sup>4</sup>

##### The PPA Programme

The ENA programme of 1936 demanded, in addition to the concession of democratic liberties, the creation in Algeria of a representative Assembly elected by universal suffrage. The PPA went beyond that programme and demanded an Algerian Parliament elected by universal suffrage without distinction in race or religion.<sup>5</sup> At his trial in 1937, Messali maintained that an Algerian Parliament already existed in the financial delegation, "although, unfortunately, in an anti-democratic manner". He went on: "We ask for its transformation into an Algerian Assembly elected by universal suffrage without distinction of race or religion." In the electoral Manifesto of 1937, the PPA reaffirmed the same ENA demands of 1933. It demanded the abolition of the special Laws for the indigenous Algerians, the code forestier and all the laws of exception. It also rejected the politics of assimilation as illustrated by 'le projet Blum-Violette' and demanded emancipation. The rejection of assimilation and the demand for emancipation were the two strong ideas of the PPA political programme from April 1937 to July 1939. Hardly had the party been founded and even before its statute had been deposited at the prefecture de la Seine, the political bureau had published a declaration in which it presented its political

programme. The programme emphasized that, "Ni assimilation, ni séparation mais émancipation ... le parti du peuple Algérien repousse toute politique d'assimilation ... Ni juridiquement, ni politiquement ni historiquement d'assimilation ne peut se faire ..."<sup>6</sup> The PPA expressed the same ideas in its Journal le Parlement Algérien. In an article entitled 'The PPA for the emancipation of the Algerian people' the idea of assimilation was rejected absolutely, and the journal employed some new religious arguments. It seemed to be influenced by the Algerian 'Ulama in this respect. In line with the Fatwa of Ibn Radis concerning naturalization, le Parlement Algérien emphasized that "The acceptance of naturalization by the Algerian Muslims is considered as a heresy. Politically naturalization is an act of treason because it implies the abandoning of the Muslim community."<sup>7</sup> The PPA adopted the slogan of neither assimilation nor separation, but emancipation. The total rejection of assimilation is very clear from this slogan, but the concept of emancipation was ambiguous. Did the PPA want emancipation from France or emancipation with France? These two versions of emancipation were different and they were significant in determining the political programme of the PPA. Emancipation with France (l'émancipation avec la France) was reformist and it was similar to the ideology of the 'Ulama in Marhalat al-Raja. France was expected to help Algeria in its struggle for independence and independent Algeria was expected to maintain good relations with France. On the other hand, emancipation from France was revolutionary. It meant in other words the separation from France and the independence of Algeria. But the PPA denied the intention of the separation from France. The programme went further and stated that, "An emancipated Algeria will be the friend and ally of France. The example of Syria and France, and of Egypt and England is entirely appropriate and this is what the Algerian party wants." In this respect, it seemed that the model of alliance between Syria and France and that between Egypt and Britain was appealing not only to the PPA nationalists but also to the 'Ulama and the Europeanized Algerians as has been indicated earlier.

The PPA programme was definitely extreme in comparison with the other programmes of the Algerian groups, but it did not state clearly the total rejection of the colonial system. It demanded emancipation with France instead of emancipation from France. The PPA demanded liberty for the whole Algerian population without distinction in race or religion. It tried to gain the sympathy of the European minority in Algeria by emphasizing that it was against racial, class and religious conflicts. In this regard the programme stated that "The policy of the PPA is to maintain a friendly relationship with all the other communities in Algeria. It would only be concerned with the participation of all the people in the political, economic and social advancement of Algeria. It stood for the liberty of all the population without distinction in race or religion." The fact that the PPA wanted to remain linked to France was emphasized by Messali as well. Later that year, explaining the aims of the PPA, Messali said, "The final aim of its activity is the emancipation of North Africa, which will remain linked to France by a system of dominions." The same ideas were repeated by Messali in an article published by the Tunisian journal Es Zohra on 5 June 1937 when he stated that he was not anti-French but anti-imperialist and stood for the total emancipation of Algeria. He went on to summarise the aim of the PPA by stating that, "The principles of the PPA are concerned with demanding a dominion status for Algeria and to persuade the French Government to recognize the individuality of the Algerian people and to give them a constitution or a parliament in which the Algerian Muslims would be the majority."<sup>8</sup> Messali was explicit in

pointing out that they wanted emancipation, the autonomy of a British dominion. He made it clear that their nature, their climate, their past and the character of their country all justified this emancipation. He promised that if emancipation was granted to them, he would give his complete and entire support and that of his party to France. What was crucial was that he denied that the party wanted separation from France, insisting only that it wanted "emancipation with France."<sup>9</sup> This was an obvious example of Messali's reformism which influenced the political programme of the PPA. This also indicated the other side of the same coin, the reformism of Messali, which has been mentioned earlier. In clarifying the word "dominion" he said, "We are not asking for independence. We do not want to throw the French into the sea. We know very well we cannot get along without them. If they wished to leave we would keep them by force."<sup>10</sup> Then he continued saying that the word 'dominion' which he used did not have in his mind the precise meaning given it by the Government Commissioner. In this connection Messali emphasized that, "It is a question only of a certain autonomy within the framework of French sovereignty. If the word dominion has a more precise meaning, I withdraw it."<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that Messali gave the above political declaration at his trial in 1941. The die-hard Messalists might argue that the above reformism of Messali was for tactical reasons, e.g. to lighten his punishment in the trial. This argument was refuted on the grounds that Messali's reformism was an established phenomenon. Long before his trial, at the end of 1936, Messali reported to the ENA members on his tour of Algeria that, "Because of opposition to the party programme as it stood and so as not to divide Muslims, the movement was ready to abandon the call for independence and demand only democratic liberties."<sup>12</sup> As early as June 1936, in a statement issued by him the morning after the ENA delegation was received at the Ministry of the Interior, Messali was talking of: "An early realization of the aspirations of the Algerian people, which will bring together the spirits and hearts of two peoples linked by historic destiny for a joint endeavour."<sup>13</sup>

The reformism of Messali was evident irrespective of the reasons behind it. M. Zakariya attributed it to Messali's return to Algeria and his realization that Muslim Algerians were not yet ready to move for independence because they were not sufficiently politically developed.<sup>14</sup> PPA reformism was in line with Messali's reformism and was influenced by it. The political programme of the PPA put forward cultural demands related to Arabic education. Its General Congress in 1938, for instance, called for construction of schools for Muslims; attachment of an Arabic faculty to the University of Algiers; transformation of the 'Ulama religious institutes into Muslim universities and obligatory instruction in Arabic.<sup>15</sup> Pan-Arabic and Pan-Islamic slogans continued to be used in the PPA Press and they were associated with the more reformist current within the movement. The slogan of Al-Sha'b, the PPA-affiliated Arabic periodical, was "The will of the people emanates from the will of God, the will of God is unassailable."<sup>16</sup>

The PPA programme also continued to pay lip-service to the North African theme. The ENA was more outspoken than the PPA in this regard. The first issue of le Parlement Algérien in 1939 called for emancipation of the Arab Algerian people, along with that of the Moroccans and Tunisians. "The coordination of the efforts of all North Africans", it said, "alone can bring about the success (honneur) of North Africa."<sup>17</sup> In addition to the North African theme, the PPA also emphasized the unity of the Algerians. At the cantonal elections of 1937 it expounded its ideas

regarding unity in the electoral programme. It affirmed that, as nationalists, their demands could not be obtained unless they were united and strong. In this connection it indicated that "A platform for our union is to be found in the realm of demands. We should conserve individually our proper ideal by uniting our efforts in a common action." The same idea of unity<sup>18</sup> was included in the minimum programme "Rassemblement Musulman", which seemed to be borrowed from the Popular Assembly constituted in France in 1935.<sup>19</sup> The PPA developed a common programme for unity with the other Algerian groups and political parties.<sup>20</sup> This common programme, which must have been accepted by the other Algerian political parties as well, might have explained PPA reformism. The PPA programme had also included some economic demands. The PPA economic charter was based primarily on the notions adopted by the General Assembly which was held in Paris on 23 and 24 August 1938. It considered economic renaissance to be essential to well-being and the fundamental basis for the social and political emancipation of Algeria.<sup>21</sup> The PPA economic charter was more moderate than the ENA programme of 1933. It moderated its fundamental economic demands (such as confiscation of large properties) in such a manner in order not to frighten the French authorities. For the sake of constituting a vote "Rassemblement Musulman", the PPA reduced its programme to the following minimum demands: "The struggle against misery by raising the minimum salary for the workers of all the corporations and the application of the principle of equal payment for equal work; the abolition of Khammessat; the fixing of peasants in land and granting them credit facilities."<sup>22</sup> This also indicated that the PPA had abandoned the fundamental demands of its 1937 electoral programme with regard to nationalization of industry and the confiscation of private properties. The PPA electoral programme of 1937 demanded "The nationalization of industry and the struggle against unemployment and the protection of local industry against imported products." Reformism appeared to be dominant in both the PPA political and economic programmes. Analysis of the social strata which belonged to the PPA showed that the majority of its members were artisans, traders and small proprietors. The consequence of this was that the doctrine of the PPA had to consider the political, economic and social aspirations of a social stratum which was relatively conservative and nationalist. In fact the PPA leaders confessed this in their reply to the PCA in December 1937. They indicated that "The PPA is an organization which is composed exclusively of Algerians. It is not the organization of the indigenous people in general. To be more precise, it is the organization of the workers who form the majority of its adherents. Some of its members also belonged to the middle bourgeoisie class and very few of them belonged to the liberal and intellectual professions. The politics of the PPA reflects its social composition."<sup>23</sup>

It was not true to assume that the PPA was limited only to reformist concessions and to deny it any role in the agitational phase. In July 1937 the PPA demonstrated in Algiers with 20,000 determined Muslims carrying banners which said "Bread, peace and liberty." This slogan in particular was definitely a PCF slogan. Nevertheless, the other slogans of the demonstration were very illuminating. In front of the House of Agriculture, the demonstrators shouted: "Land for peasants". When they passed in front of the préfecture de police they shouted demands for an Algerian Parliament and finally in front of Algiers mosque they shouted demands for respect for Islam and the Arabic language. In front of the demonstration a red and white flag was carried throughout to arouse the national consciousness of the Algerians. The opposition of the PPA to the



resolutions of the Congrès Musulman Algérien was very significant in rejecting the assimilation and the naturalization of the Algerians. In this regard El-Oumma maintained that Algerians already had a nationality and it was impossible to change one's nationality "as one changes a tie."<sup>24</sup>

A year later, in one of its most anti-French statements to date, the paper asserted that North Africa had been conquered by force, but it had never accepted the French conquest and emphasized that "North Africa is tied to France by no sentiment if it is not the hate that one hundred years of colonization have succeeded in creating in our hearts."<sup>25</sup> "The suitcase or the coffin" would soon become a slogan associated with the PPA as well. Europeans could not, it suggested, remain in Algeria, they would either have to leave or they would die. Along these lines, Messali himself, echoing Amash, said that, "Our beautiful country should not be soiled any longer by the presence of the foreigners. All the French will be pushed out of our home and into the sea."<sup>26</sup> Despite the ENA-PPA reformism, their call for emancipation was the more striking because they remained the only Muslims in Algeria to make it before the Second World War. The Communists were just moving towards their idea of "a nation in the process of forming", a formula Thorez came up with in 1939 to justify continued French hegemony over Algeria. However, he insisted that, "the right to divorce does not carry with it an obligation to do so."<sup>27</sup> The Ulama while looking toward eventual independence, were resigned to the painstaking task of forming a Muslim elite to govern the country. As to the Evolués, after the failure of the Blum-Violette bill, they moved towards a federalist approach that saw Algeria as autonomous within the French system.

#### Assessment of ENA-PPA

Although the ENA was established by the Communists in order to infiltrate the North African emigrants in France, it turned out to be the first nationalist organization for them. The example of the Etoile demonstrated the incompatibility of nationalism and communism in countries like Algeria in the phase of the struggle for national liberation. It was significant to note that while the communists of the ENA had encouraged the promotion of nationalism, they had been superseded by it.

The ENA-PPA was a movement which was based on programmes. It lacked a well-formulated and worked-out doctrine in comparison with the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (MTLD), which was established in 1946. Moreover, it was even difficult to get access to these programmes and, as the result of this, the ideological aspects of this movement were not deeply investigated. In this connection, and in reference to the ENA, M. Carlier indicated that, "Les difficultés que nous avons rencontrées sont également pratiques en raison même des sources, rares et d'accès difficiles. L'oubli dans lequel est tombé la lère ENA trouve ici une autre raison, car les aspects idéologiques de la question n'expliquent pas tout."<sup>28</sup> The pre-World War II ENA-PPA represented a low-profile approach to Algerian emancipation which concentrated on agitational speeches and techniques only. On March 17, 1941, Messali was condemned by the tribunal of Vichy to sixteen years hard labour. The PPA was dissolved and it went underground from 1939 to 1946 when the MTLD was established. During this period, the members of the PPA infiltrated the Europeanized Algerians and tried to influence their ideas in regard to French colonialism. Their efforts were manifested in such documents as the Manifesto of 1943. The bad experience of the Algerian nationalists with the French colonial system and the introduction of new ideas to Algeria during the war period had

resulted in an escalation of the conflict in Algeria. The Algerian national ideology had transformed itself from reform to nationhood. New demands were put forward by the Algerian nationalists which were totally different from the demands of the pre-war period. There was a total transformation in the ideology, tactics and means of the Algerian nationalists. In reference to the clandestine PPA, the Algerian documents of the period stated that, "Just before the start of the Second World War, the PPA was dissolved and its militants were imprisoned. Under these circumstances, the only available option for the party was to go underground and organise clandestinely. The tactics and the means of struggle have also been considered."<sup>19</sup> This indicated the role of the colonial system in the escalation of conflict and the transformation of national ideology. The moderate demands of the ENA-PPA were rejected by the French colonial system. The consequences of failure would often be that demands were increased and new means of action were sought. French intransigence seemed to lead inevitably toward the radicalization of the reformist movement in Algeria including the Evolués, the Ulama and the radical nationalists. The examination of the ideological principles of the MTLD reveals this quite clearly.

#### Notes

1. Police report, March 1937
2. El-Oummah, no.48 of 10 April 1937
3. El-Oummah and Le Parlement Algérien were two press organs which belonged to the PPA and they were published in French. Al-Sha'b was also affiliated to the PPA and it was published in Arabic.
4. The PPA programme could be extracted from the following documents: La déclaration du bureau politique du PPA, published in El-Oummah of 10 April 1937; Le Manifeste électoral rédigé pour les élections cantonales d'Octobre 1937, published by the journal La Justice of 14 October 1937; les motions votées par l'Assemblée Générale du 24 août 1938, published in El-Oummah of 27 August 1939, and finally a programme article "Le PPA pour l'émancipation du peuple Algérien" published in Le Parlement Algérien of 17 June 1939
5. These demands were included in the ENA programme of 1933. See Comité de l'Afrique Française, 1933, 576; see also El-Oummah, August-September 1935
6. El-Oummah, 10 April 1937
7. Le Parlement Algérien, 17 June 1939; see also the editorial of no.1, 18 May 1939 and of no.2, 3 June 1939
8. An article by Messali Hadj in Tunisian paper Es Zuhra of 5 June 1937, quoted by Ahmad Kinanish, 1972
9. Préfecture d'Oran, CIE, 1941a, 18
10. Ibid., 24
11. Ibid., 25
12. Police report, November 28, 1936
13. Benazet, 1947, 35
14. Memorandum written for the French, Préfecture d'Oran, CIE, 1940a, 12
15. El-Oummah, no.66, August 28, 1938
16. Kaddache, 1970, 240
17. Aitamer, n.d., 43
18. La Justice, 14 October 1937
19. El-Oummah, 11 March 1938

20. "L'Union oui, mais avec qui et autour de quoi?" Le Parlement Algérien, 3 June 1939
21. Motion votée par l'Assemblée Générale du PPA, tenue à Paris les 23 et 24 août 1938 and published by El-Oummah 27 August 1938
22. El-Oummah, 27 August 1938
23. "Appel à l'Union", El-Oummah, no.58 December 1937
24. El-Oummah, January 1938
25. El-Oummah, July-August 1939
26. Comité de l'Afrique Française, 1936, 650
27. Speech at PCF Congress of Arles, La Lutte Sociale, 3 November 1939, 10 November 1939 and 17 November 1939
28. Carlier, 1972, 908
29. MTLD Commission Centrale d'Information et de Documentation, nd, 37

## 5. IDEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES OF THE MTLD

The Algerian nation, its existence, sovereignty and total independence was the core of the Algerian struggle against French colonialism. The radicals of the MTLD believed that 'l'Algérie forme une nation'. According to them, analysis of the elements that constitute a nation would definitely confirm this. Algeria had a definite territory, an established economy and the Algerian nation was distinguished by its national character and creed. Religious and linguistic factors had helped greatly in formulating the national character of the Algerians. From the Moroccan to the Tunisian frontiers, the mentality of the Algerian people was similar.

This would not eliminate the existence of certain regional diversities. Even within the Messaliat movement, there was a division between the Kabyles and the Arabs to the extent that in the late 1940s the Berberists said explicitly: "Algeria is not Arab but Algerian."<sup>1</sup> Algerian culture is influenced by Arab and Islamic characteristics including the Berber ethnic group. Most of the Algerians believed that the Berbers were of Arab origin who emigrated from Arabia to North Africa before the emergence of Islam. Evidence for this assumption was deduced from linguistic studies and the dialect of the Berbers.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, the MTLD documents stated that, "The existence in Algeria of a Berber dialect beside the national language would not impede the mutual comprehension between the Arabs and the Berbers. The Berberophones (Kabyle, Mozabite or Chaouis) used to work and live in the Arabophone regions and at the same time the Arabophones used to sell their grain in the Berberophone regions. For this reason, there was no difficulty in communication between these two groups in Algeria or the Maghrib."<sup>3</sup> The resolutions of the first Congress of the MTLD referred to the incontestable reality of the Algerian nation. It emphasized with extreme satisfaction that the suppression of the Algerian state, the policies of direct administration and of assimilation would never entail the disappearance of the Algerian nation. It also affirmed strongly that the Algerian nation was inscribed inside the heart of each Algerian and this would destroy the untrue allegations of French colonialism and its propaganda of division among the Algerian people.<sup>4</sup> With a view to the discussion of the Algerian statute, the MTLD deputies, in conformity with the mission received and the will of the Algerian people, had decided to institute proceedings against French colonialism; to affirm the profound and legitimate aspirations of the Algerian nation in connection with its liberty and absolute sovereignty; and to adopt the tactics of non-cooperation in regard to the discussion of the statute.<sup>5</sup> Due to this fundamental issue of the existence and incontestable reality of the Algerian nation, the Algerians waged an unceasing struggle to achieve their legitimate aspirations for a free life.

### Nationalism and Democracy

The concepts of nationalism and democracy were the two major principles of the Algerian nationalist movement against French colonialism. Nationalism was the fundamental principle of the Algerian liberation struggle. Faced with French colonialism, the Algerians struggled for the sake of the Algerian nation and for the liberation and prosperity of the whole geographical, historical, economic, social and cultural entity which was Algeria. Hence the MTLD nationalists believed that "Nationalism ought to be defined as the love of the nation. It is a reaction against

annexation and the affirmation of the national values and the will for their triumph. To be a nationalist is to have a soft place in one's heart for the solution of the political, economic and social problems of the native country."<sup>6</sup>

#### Liberating Nationalism and Oppressive Nationalism

The radicals of the MTLN asserted that many people have condemned nationalism as being chauvinistic. However, they believed in the distinction between two types of nationalism: liberating nationalism and oppressive nationalism. On the basis of their definition of nationalism as being the love of the nation, they deduced that "Any nationalism which exists in a country of oppressed people is a liberating nationalism, because it is concerned with the liberty of the colonized people and the consolidation of their moral and material values." Liberating nationalism was democratic in its content and it was revolutionary in its ultimate goal, which was the liberation of the nation, the exercise of its own sovereignty, the speaking of its own language and the practising of its religion.

Liberating nationalism was the only thing which was consistent with the sacred rights of man. On the other hand, they argued, oppressive nationalism was the one which characterised most of the European nations. It considered the nation as a dogma elevated above all other things and always sustained by hypertrophy of historical, linguistic and racial factors. This oppressive nationalism preached that all rights should be sacrificed for the sake of the nation which was considered as an idol. Expansion by annexing the neighbouring countries was considered as essential for the survival of the regimes that adopted the ideology of oppressive nationalism. The MTLN nationalists asserted that oppression of the conquered nations would be inevitable in such circumstances, because individual liberties would certainly be suppressed among the conquered people. Thus they concluded that oppressive nationalism was imperialist in essence because it focussed on conquering and dominating other nations, while liberating nationalism was progressive because it centered on the emancipation of the colonized people. It was obvious that the MTLN nationalists wanted to say quite explicitly that Algerian nationalism was progressive because it was mainly concerned with the liberation of Algeria. It was also important to note that the term 'oppressive nationalism' was deliberately coined in order to attack French colonialism. Then they proceeded to discuss the essentials of Algerian nationalism.

#### Algerian Nationalism

Algerian nationalism, being the reaction of an oppressed nation against colonialism, was a liberating nationalism. It was by definition opposed to the chauvinistic and imperialist European oppressing nationalism. Algerian nationalism was the love of the Algerian fatherland and the restoration of Algerian sovereignty. It was the voluntary struggle for the political, economic, social and cultural liberation of the Algerian people. The ultimate goal of Algerian nationalism was the desire to eliminate colonialist oppression and to lead the Algerian nation towards liberty, democracy and well-being.



### Algerian Nationalism and Race

In some of the European countries, race was one of the fundamental elements of their expansionist nationalism. The superiority of the colon and the inferiority of the colonized was on the basis of race. On the same basis also, one nation could be highly civilized and another could be very primitive and incapable of making any progress. Liberating Algerian nationalism condemned this attitude. The liberating struggle in Algeria against French imperialism was not a struggle against a racial group at all; it was a struggle against an alien political system which enslaved the Algerians and put an end to their material and cultural development. They argued that the problem of the European minority in Algeria was not a racial problem. In this regard, they indicated that the colons in Algeria would be treated as if they were in their original native homes: 'Cette minorité se considère comme chez elle'.<sup>8</sup>

The Algerians had no desire to force them to abandon their natural rights as human beings in order to live in Algeria and work there. The Algerian nationalists opposed the fact that the European minority wanted to preserve certain colonial privileges and be considered as a superior class with reference to the indigenous population. They wanted them to be treated as equals among equals. The attitude of the MTLN nationalists in connection with the European minority in Algeria rejected the colonialist propaganda of 'the suitcase or the coffin'. The Algerian nationalists denied any intention to 'throw the French in the sea or to cut their throats'.<sup>9</sup> The Algerian nationalists were not in favour of a free Algeria for one person or one oligarchy in particular. This was not their objective. They wanted to create an Algerian state 'for the people and by the people', where all the Algerians, without distinction of race or religion, would be free and cheerful. To oppose the colonialist campaign which presented them as a party of fanatical and chauvinistic nationalism, the MTLN members affirmed that, in independent Algeria, the colons would have the right of Algerian citizenship.<sup>10</sup> In connection with the strategic point of view, the MTLN nationalists thought to mobilize the European minority, and made them know, by profound explanatory work, the repression which was done in their names and from which the Algerian people suffered.

### Algerian Nationalism and Religion

In the second Congress of the MTLN in 1953, it was declared that the Algerian people were composed of ninety per cent Muslims and ten per cent Christians and Jews. The MTLN members thought that Algerian nationalism should neither be confused with racism nor be identified with a cult of religion. In this regard they demanded respect for religious belief in conformity with the spirit of the tradition of Islam. The Islamic religion did not recognize the existence of frontiers. The MTLN nationalists expressed the view that geographic frontiers would create a whirl of interests, suspense and communal aspirations before which religious confession would wear away or become obliterated. They also emphasized that religious fanaticism would destroy the unity of the nation. For this reason, they wanted sometimes to play down the role of the religious factor. In this regard they indicated that "The nation is the major core of liberating nationalism which should not involve any principal action of a religious nature."<sup>11</sup> While the radical nationalists sometimes wanted to suppress the religious factor, the Algerian Ulama associated Algerian nationalism with Islam. It seemed that the radical nationalists wanted to

make a distinction between religion and politics in order to undermine the influence of the Ulama. Or this might have been deliberately done in order not to antagonize the European minority and to gain their sympathy for an independent Algeria for all Algerians without distinction in religion or race. The leftist members of the MTLN argued that Algerian nationalism was basically a political movement.<sup>12</sup> They thought that the role of religion was secondary in the Algerians' struggle for their political, cultural, economic and social liberation.<sup>13</sup> This point of view ignored the fact that Islam is both a state and religion and the Algerian national culture was deeply imbued with an Arab-Islamic character. To demonstrate the validity of their argument, the MTLN nationalists relied on the Syrian-Lebanese example. They thought that the secondary role of the religious factor in the political liberation process was evidenced in the Syrian-Lebanese national struggle against French colonialism. The Syrian-Lebanese Christians struggled equally with the Muslims for the liberation of Syria and Lebanon. The MTLN nationalists believed that the era of crusades and religious wars was over. The struggle was between nations which were oppressed and nations which were oppressors. It was no longer the Muslims who opposed the Christians but the colonized who opposed the colonizers. In order to serve their own interests, the French colonialists confused Algerian nationalism and Islam. The MTLN nationalists remarked that the French imperialists constantly opposed the Europeans or French to Muslims, that was to say they opposed a nationality to a religion. The fact that the Algerian people were composed of different religious communities pushed the radicals of the MTLN to play down the religious factor and exclude the Islamic religion from Algerian nationalism. They wanted all the Algerians, irrespective of race or religion, to unite against French colonialism and struggle jointly for the total liberation of Algeria.

#### Democracy

Democracy was the second principle of the MTLN doctrine. It had always been inherent in the character of the Messalist movement. It had been expressed in Messali's denunciation of communism as 'red-fascism' as well as in the movement's call for a constituent Assembly "elected by universal suffrage without distinction of race or religion."<sup>14</sup> Messali said it meant 'Gouvernement du peuple'. "Democracy", he continued, "is first of all democracy in the political realm, participation by all of the people in the governing of the country, general and local management of its affairs, its permanent control to ensure respect for fundamental liberties."<sup>15</sup> But what would be the form of government of this democratic state? Would it be a constitutional monarchy or a Republic? The MTLN radicals did not like to opt for the first because the time of monarchies was past. In addition to this, they knew well that the Algerian people were composed of different communities. Because of this they argued that "The best form of Government for Algeria is the Republic (la forme République). Therefore, Algeria should be a Republican state."<sup>16</sup> The term democracy implied liberty and represented the most dear aspiration for the colonized people. Being thirsty for this democracy, the Algerians struggled for their political liberties, for the respect of their dignity and their cultural heritage. In this regard the MTLN members stated that "This is why we consider democracy as an essential principle which guides us in the anti-colonialist struggle and in the restoration of our nation in the future."<sup>17</sup> As a result, and by preserving this democratic spirit, they

introduced an ideological factor in their struggle. In addition to government by the people, the MTLD nationalists referred to economic democracy "la démocratie sur le plan économique". According to them, poverty should not exist in Algeria. The democracy which they advocated was a political-economic democracy capable of providing economic prosperity. The Algerian masses who suffered from hunger and need wanted the creation of a new regime where social justice ruled. The MTLD nationalists did not want a free Algeria where only the capitalists governed. They wanted an Independent Algeria where all the people were prosperous and each man had what satisfied his needs. For the realization of the politico-economic democracy, the MTLD nationalists thought it was necessary to attain certain reforms in the economic and social fields:

(a) In the economic field:

- (i) The creation of a truly national economy by contrast with the existing imperialistic-colonialist economy.
- (ii) The reorganisation of agriculture in the general interest of the Algerians e.g. Agrarian Reform.
- (iii) The establishment of industry, in accord with the great natural possibilities of Algeria.
- (iv) The nationalization of the instruments of production.
- (v) The harmonization of the Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian economies with the objective of making a common market of production and consumption.<sup>18</sup> There was no indication here of whether Algeria would have any economic ties to France. Yet the report represented the first attempt in decades to relate the MTLD socio-economic demands to a view of Algeria.

(b) In the social field:

The suggestions in the social field consisted of material and cultural plans. The material plan included the equitable redistribution of the national revenue to attain social justice, and the liberty of the syndicates. The cultural plan included the diffusion of national culture, technical education and the struggle against illiteracy. In the social domain, democracy would encourage the development of the individual personalities, the manifestation of popular sentiments and the development of the intellectual. With the fulfilment of these conditions, the MTLD concept of democracy would then be political and economic and it would go hand in hand with social justice and the economic prosperity of the Algerians. The MTLD nationalists believed that democracy was vital to the Algerians in their struggle against French colonialism. It was true that there was no genuine democracy with illiteracy and hunger. In such circumstances the people would not decide freely and they would be dominated by those who owned the money. Economic democracy and political democracy are the two sides of a single coin. They go together, and they are inseparable. No genuine democracy would be realized in the absence of one of them.



## Notes

1. Zagoria, 1973, 244
2. Interview by the writer with Dr M. 'Imaymour, political adviser to Boumedienne, on 10 July 1975
3. MTLD, Commission Centrale d'Information et de Documentation, 1951, 6
4. MTLD, 1947, 1; see also Maghreb Arabi, no.7, 1947
5. "Au Service de la Nation Afrique" Maghreb Arabi, no.7, 1947
6. MTLD, Commission Centrale d'Information et de Documentation, 1951, 25
7. Ibid., 26
8. MTLD, 1953, 29
9. MTLD, Commission Centrale d'Information et de Documentation, 1951, 28
10. MTLD, 1953, 40
11. MTLD, Commission Centrale d'Information et de Documentation, 1951, 27
12. Interview by the writer with Manawar Maroush on 13 August 1976
13. Ibid.
14. MTLD, 1947, 2
15. MTLD, 1953, 30
16. Ibid., 29
17. MTLD, Commission Centrale d'Information et de Documentation, 1951, 28
18. MTLD, 1953, 29

## 6. FROM AGITATION TO ORGANISATION, EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

After the first Congress of the MTLD in 1947, the radicals of the MTLD started talking about the means of action for achieving Algerian sovereignty. In this regard the first national Congress emphasized equally the following means of action:

- (i) The political struggle in all forms against colonialism.
- (ii) The organisation of the masses.
- (iii) Unfiring propaganda affirming the sacred rights of the Algerian nation and denouncing implacably the crimes of imperialist politics and supporters.

The second Congress of the MTLD in 1953 represented a landmark in the evolution of the Algerian national ideology from reform to Revolution. It represented the shift from agitation (supposedly the ideology of Messali Hadj) to organisation and education. The agitatory ideology had produced an excitable state among the Algerian masses and concentrated on demanding independence for Algeria through legalistic means such as emancipation by law or through the ballot box. No crucial results were obtained from the practice of these policies. The MTLD nationalists thought in terms of changing their demands and the means of achieving them. This evolution in the national ideology of Algeria necessitated the organisation and the education of the Algerian masses. The opening speech of the second MTLD Congress referred to this point explicitly as follows: "Passent de la phase d'agitation à la phase d'organisation et d'éducation."<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Mezerna also indicated that, in order to achieve their ultimate objective of liberation, it was essential that they should internationalize the Algerian problem by creating sympathy for their cause. He thought that, unless they internationalized the Algerian problem, they would never attain their independence. In reference to the question of internationalization, the report of the second MTLD Congress emphasized the importance of seeking the help and the support of the Arab-Asian bloc.

Messali Hadj participated in the second MTLD Congress. He confessed that in his life he made many mistakes but they were all good lessons for him. He admitted to the participants that "To make a mistake is not a crime, but to insist on making mistakes is a dangerous error. Throughout my militant life I committed several mistakes but each one of these mistakes has been a good lesson for me."<sup>3</sup> It appeared that the mistakes he made were related to his confidence in the French parties of the Left and the Popular Front in particular. He thought that he could convince these political parties to support independence for Algeria. This might account for the reformism of Messali Hadj and his belief that he could gain some concessions from the French colonial system. At last he was totally convinced that the Algerian nationalists should depend on themselves alone in their struggle against imperialist France. He emphasized that a really serious political party would depend on itself, on its spirit of sacrifice and on its will to conquer the exploiter by all means. He told the members of the MTLD to depend upon themselves in order to liberate Algeria. He emphasized that they should not expect anybody else to do this job for them because there was no trace whatsoever in history that some people were liberated by another people for the love of humanity.<sup>4</sup> Hence the radical nationalists of the MTLD concluded that liberty could never be given but only taken by force. The emancipation of Algeria could not be realized without the organization and education of the Algerian masses. The shift from agitation to organization and education would also require the reconsideration of the ideology, doctrine, strategy, tactics and methods of

The MILD had defined its political objective and its conception of independence by the following formula: "An Algerian constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage without distinction of race or religion". It wanted the Algerian people to have absolute liberty in determining the principles and institutions that governed the country. The party's conception of independence had been inspired by two essential factors: on one side by its democratic spirit and on the other by its wish to see all the Algerians who love justice and liberty participating actively in the struggle against colonial domination. If the majority of the MILD radical nationalists had adhered to the idea of independence, it remained for them to know the content of this independence. The report of the second Congress stated that "Independence is not an ultimate goal for its own sake (un but final), but it is a means for the realization of a political, economic and social order." The ideological deficiency of radical nationalism was that its conception of independence lacked a definite substance and content. The MILD radical nationalists argued that

#### Ideological Inadequacies

The MILD nationalists believed that their party had responsibility for leading the Algerian people towards independence. In order to achieve this goal, the radicals in the MILD knew that they had to struggle against a relatively strong and organized colonialism in all fields. It remained to find out whether they were qualified to do this job. In other words, did the MILD discuss all the means to be utilized in order to attain its goals? Did it have a definite ideology of emancipation? Did it possess a doctrine? It was interesting to note the distinction between ideology and doctrine in the MILD literature. This distinction will be drawn later on. The answer to these questions which was given by the Algerian radical nationalists reflected that the MILD had some inadequacies in all these fields. The participants in the second MILD Congress in 1953 suggested the study in detail of all these inadequacies and the provision of the relevant remedies to these questions. The major inadequacies were related to the fields of ideology, doctrine, strategy, tactics and tactics.

#### Critique of Radical Nationalism

In fact Messali had outlined for them the broad lines of this new phase of the Algerian struggle against French colonialism. He referred to the education of the people, the real existence of the party internally and externally and asked them to draw the attention of international opinion to their struggle. He advised them to have good organization, good press and good representation outside Algeria. He confirmed to them that the harmonization of these activities was the most indispensable task to advance their struggle. He concluded his speech by asking God to cement the unity of the party around their revolutionary principles. The era of full assimilation of Algerians into French society was certainly gone by the end of World War II. To recall the words of the Manifesto, "The hour is passed when an Algerian will demand anything else than to be an Algerian Muslim." By 1945, however, most of the Algerian nationalists had gone beyond assimilation to demanding some form of autonomy or independent Algerian Government. By the second MILD Congress, the inevitability of violent revolution was thus clearly apparent. The MILD reconsideration of the ideology of the national movement, the strategy, tactics and methods of struggle were strong evidence of this.

independence was not a political act only in the sense of having a flag, a parliament and a constitution. They thought that that was a formal independence as opposed to a real and genuine one. They emphasized that, if a country was granted this formal independence and it remained economically subordinated to the previous imperial power, then it should still be considered a colony. The radicals of the MTLD emphasized that genuine independence was political as well as an economic and social emancipation from the dominating colonial regime. The problem which confronted Algeria, according to them, was not only to become free and sovereign, but also the formulation of the principles on which its institutions would be based after independence. Their discussions highlighted the question of whether the MTLD should take any measures beforehand for the building of an independent Algeria and they all agreed that the answer was simply 'No'. This reflected for them the ideological inadequacies of radical nationalism. As a matter of fact the post-independence problems of development and the transformation of nationalism into socialism were not discussed until the Algerians were convinced that independence was possible. Certain measures in connection with these issues were included in the Tripoli programme of 1962. It was important to note that the MTLD radicals had reserved the term ideology for the post-independence issues of development. In this regard they stated that "Ideology is a statement of objectives which could be realized after independence. On the other hand, all the objectives before independence are related to the field of doctrine." Thus the MTLD nationalists had drawn a distinction between ideology and doctrine, which was totally different from what had been recognized in political science. The national idea and the means of struggle before independence were confined to the realm of doctrine, while the ideas of development in the post-independence era were confined to the realm of ideology.

#### Doctrinal Deficiencies

The radical nationalists of the MTLD maintained that their party suffered from doctrinal deficiencies as it did in the ideological field. The doctrine of the MTLD, according to them, was concerned with the national idea and the means of the struggle. In this regard the report of the second MTLD Congress stated that "The doctrine with which we are concerned is related to all the necessary means for achieving independence. A coherent doctrine is necessarily an idea and the proper means and methods for struggle."<sup>6</sup> The Algerian nationalist idea was the principal force and substance of the MTLD doctrine. The Algerian nationalists considered it as a psycho-political force in the sense that it was essentially related to the political field and assimilated by the masses for its psychological appeal. The MTLD had provoked the ardour of organization and won over the Algerian masses to its side because of this nationalist idea. The enormous sacrifices of the Algerian people and the MTLD militants reflected the psycho-political force of the nationalist idea. The doctrinal deficiencies were related to the fact that the MTLD did not display great efforts in explaining the nature of the Algerian nationalist idea. Algerian nationalism was accused of being chauvinist, fascist and communist. In fact the MTLD did show some efforts to explain its nationalist idea. The MTLD literature referred to Algerian nationalism and race, Algerian nationalism and religion, etc. But the efforts manifested along these lines were insufficient to negate the accusations levied against it.

Part of the doctrinal deficiencies were related to the side of organization in relation to the Algerians inside and outside Algeria. In order to counter these accusations, they suggested that the Algerians ought to be organized internally and externally. The knowledge of the actual circumstances was crucial in formulating the relevant doctrine. The Algerian nationalist idea had five major characteristics of being defensive, democratic, liberationist, non-communist and non-materialist. The organization of the Algerian masses and the explanation of these principles to the colon population would help in creating favourable conditions for the independence of Algeria. The choice of the means of action was crucial to the doctrine of the MTLD. In this respect the MTLD nationalists demanded that the party should evaluate the necessary means which were possible and could be modified to suit the desired objectives. They insisted that the means utilized should be revolutionary. They believed that "the revolutionary means the one who utilises all the possible ways authorized by the law to reach his objectives." The basic doctrinal deficiency of the MTLD was that its concept of the revolutionary was confused. How could a revolutionary limit himself only to the legal means, and what would be the difference between a revolutionary and a reformist in this regard? Moreover, how could the MTLD be a revolutionary party with this reformist doctrine? On these grounds one could hardly distinguish between the MTLD reformism and that of the communists, the Ulama or the secular reformism of the western educated elites. In addition to this reformist doctrine of the MTLD, it appeared to be pragmatic as well. It noted that "only the acts command the action of the revolutionary" and no real revolutionary could exist without constant touch with reality. In this connection it emphasized that "The revolutionary must therefore descend from the pedestal of his theory to root himself in concrete life, in order to draw upon it and to verify therein his principles of action. The historic occurrences taught that it was necessary to shift from the phase of agitation when the people absorbed the diffused ideas of the psycho-political phase." Before the second MTLD Congress, the doctrine of the party was concerned with agitation primarily and it was limited to the psycho-political phase. By the second Congress, the MTLD nationalists made the crossing from the psycho-political phase to the phase of organization and education. The fundamental inadequacy of the educational and organizational phase was that it was limited only to the party and did not include the entire Algerian people. To organize the party and strengthen it could constitute a strategic objective, but not a definite phase to be emphasized in the doctrine. The education of the entire Algerian masses was crucial to the party's doctrine in this phase. In order to instigate a national revolution in Algeria, the radicals of the MTLD needed to consider not only the forces at their disposal within the MTLD, but also the favourable potential forces that could be found outside it. The MTLD efforts could have been more effective if they were waged at the national scale as were those of the FLN at the beginning of the war for national liberation.

#### Strategic Imprecision

The MTLD nationalists defined strategy as follows: "A strategy is the precise and detailed description of the methods of struggle."<sup>6</sup> It was essential to consider the determining factors in the strategy and the forces behind them. On one side those forces were related to colonialism, its army, its police, its system of administration, and the strong imperial



economy, and on the other side were those which were related to the national movement and the Algerian masses. It was very obvious that the forces of colonialism were superior to the forces of the national movement. The principal strategic objectives of the national movement which could counter the colonial forces were:

- (i) The struggle against repression.
- (ii) The reinforcement of the union.
- (iii) The mobilization of external forces.
- (iv) The organization of national cadres, youth workers and women.
- (v) The diffusion of national culture.
- (vi) The organization of the emigrant workers in France

These strategic objectives were further categorized into three major groups by the radicals of the MTLD.

- (i) The obstacles-objectives which were concerned with the struggle against colonialism. In this regard repression was the most serious obstacle to the realization of the essential objectives of the party. The MTLD radicals recommended that the struggle against colonial repression should be pursued immediately until the realization of the independence of Algeria.
- (ii) The fundamental objectives which were concerned with the organization of the para-political forces such as the workers, the youth, the women and the diffusion of national culture. The radical nationalists suggested that these objectives should also be pursued immediately and seriously. In regard to the expected role of the Algerian workers, they noted that, in most of the colonies, the workers had played an important role in the struggle for liberation. The example of Tunisia in this respect was the most edifying. They thought that the Algerian workers constituted a strong force which had been neglected by the national movement. The organization of the workers, the youth and the Algerian women was crucial to the liberation of Algeria not only in the political sense, but also in economic and social respects. The national culture should also be emphasized along the lines of the struggle against illiteracy and the diffusion of the national language. They noted that special attention should have been given to the instruction of the militants and the Algerian masses.
- (iii) The direct instruments and objectives which were related to reinforcing the party internally and allowing it to accomplish its tasks conveniently. These direct instruments included the organization of the Algerian emigrants in France, the organization of the national cadres and the unity of the Algerian people. The Algerian emigrants in France should be organized in collaboration with the national movement in Algeria and in view of finding possible allies among the French masses. The Algerian national movement had suffered greatly from the lack of coordination and the absence of unity within the ranks of the nationalists. The unity of the Algerian nationalists was an effective force against French colonialism.

The persuasive politics of memoranda and petitions proved to be ineffective. The MRLD radicals believed that the proper study of the strategic deficiencies and the application of their suggested remarks was the only safeguard for the effective participation of the Algerian masses against French colonialism.

#### Tactical Shortcomings

The Algerian radical nationalists argued that the study of political strategy would be useless if it was not followed by another study of tactics, because strategy and tactics complement each other. There was a close and direct relationship between the two variables to the extent that one could not be used without the other. This direct relationship was evidenced from the definitions of these two terms in the military and political language. In military language, strategy is the art which is applied to the means of leading the army to the position of the enemy, whereas disposing and employing the troops on the ground which it should combat is a matter of tactics. On the other hand, in political language, strategy is the art of fixing the ultimate objectives and of leading an entire disposition of forces in a course of action, while tactics concern the art of the possible in the sense of emphasizing the means which would permit one to achieve desired aims after calculating the circumstantial factors of great significance. The essential role of tactics consisted of complementing and completing the strategy. The major tactical elements included:

- (i) The politics of alliance,
- (ii) The elections,
- (iii) The political programme,
- (iv) The propaganda.

The tactical deficiencies of the MRLD were related to its strictness on the matter of alliances. This was the reason why unity between the Algerian political parties did not materialize. The MRLD made union conditional upon adhesion to the idea of independence, when it might have been realized on other platforms and other objectives. Even when there was an alliance between the Algerian political parties, such as the Algerian Front, its constitution did not answer the expectations of the people. On the election side, the deficiencies were related to the incapacities of certain elected nationalists. They were hesitant to take any initiatives because they did not want to antagonize the colonies. Two basic lessons could be drawn from this situation: the party should take an interest in the choice of the candidates and it should consider their competence and militancy at the same time. The electoral politics of the party should have studied the political, economic and social situation of the country. In connection with this regard, the political programme of the party was not clearly defined and it did not fix immediate objectives. The party should have had a detailed programme of political, economic and social actions. As far as propaganda was concerned, the party did not touch all these spheres. There was no harmony and consistency between the propaganda which was initiated by the militant nationalists and that which was expounded by the literature of the party. As these deficiencies were not taken seriously, they left their marks on the formation of the militant, his education and his discipline. These factors were essential for the liberation of Algeria. The shift from agitation to organization and education necessitated serious tackling of the inadequacies of the MRLD.

Along these lines the doctrinal, ideological, strategic and tactical deficiencies needed a proper examination and suggestions for the most adequate remedies. The phase of organization and education itself represented a prelude to direct action and revolutionary populism.

#### Notes

1. MTLD, 1947, 3
2. Discours d'ouverture prononcé par Ahmad Mezerna à la Deuxième Congrès National, MTLD, 1953, 7
3. Message de Messali Hadj in MTLD, 1953
4. Ibid., 11
5. MTLD, 1953, 28
6. Ibid., 30
7. Ibid., 33
8. Ibid., 37



## 7. THE FORMATION OF THE FRONT DE LIBERATION NATIONALE (FLN)

Joan Gillespie argued that the MTLD's reaction to the collapse of the statute of 1947 and election rigging was more violent and more internally divisive than that of the Union Démocratique du Manifeste Algérien (UDMA). She proclaimed that "Shortly after the passage of the statute, a group of young PPA militants, who had worked underground during the war period, proceeded to form a para-military force, the Organisation Spéciale (OS). From 1947 to 1950, the OS collected arms, trained recruits, and planned a strategy for the eventual take-over of Algeria. While they received the blessing of Messali, the young leaders of the OS, Ait Ahmad, Ben Bella and Kheidar did not succeed in convincing the MTLD leader that the moment was ripe for attack."<sup>1</sup> The second MTLD Congress in 1953 was crucial in the evolution of the Algerian national ideology because it resulted in the split of the party and the emergence of the revolutionary populists. The split within the MTLD was the result of the dispute between Messali Hadj, the leader of the party, on one hand, and the members of the central committee of the party, on the other. In fact the dispute between Messali and Al-Ahwal, the leader of the centralists, began in 1946 over a tactical question which was related to ideas of participating in the elections of that year. The division between the two factions over parliamentary participation carried over to another tactical issue: that of a united Algerian front. Al-Ahwal and the other "centralists" were generally in favour of the formation of an Algerian front and they were prepared to make some concessions to achieve one. They looked in particular to the UDMA as a political ally, being considerably more suspicious of the PCA. At its meeting of September 1953, the central committee decided that "Union being a vital question for the Algerian cause, the party must imbue the people with the idea and act to impose it on all the national groups."<sup>2</sup> J. D. Zagoria stated that a similar division developed within the leadership of the MTLD over the question of North African unity. The "centralists" joined in creating the committee for the liberation of the Arab Maghrib in 1952. Messali tended to treat Bourguiba and Aïal Al-Fasi as reformists and refused military support for the Tunisians.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Muhammad Harbi indicated that the "centralists" wanted a revolution geared specifically to Algeria, without international or pan-Arab overtones. He explained that their opposition to Messali on tactics extended to strategy and programme.<sup>4</sup> The two factions of the MTLD were therefore deeply divided over the direction the movement should take and the methods it should employ. The major criticism of the central committee against Messali was that he developed a cult of personality which became a kind of political maraboutism. The first issue of *La Nation Algérienne*, the organ of the centralists, proclaimed that "one conflict began when Messali demanded full powers from the newly-formed central committee in September 1953. The central committee believed, on the one hand, that personal power was inconceivable in a revolutionary party, and, on the other hand, that the situation did not permit the vesting of full powers in one man. In reality the conflict had as its profound causes the questions of leadership and methods."<sup>5</sup> At the meeting of l'Arba in March 1953, the central committee rejected the formula "president for life" and the presidential right of veto. The centralists wanted collective leadership and argued that a number of heads were better than one.

The dispute between Messali and the central committee alienated some of the young revolutionaries of the MTLD who decided to reject these two factions and to establish the Comité Révolutionnaire d'Unité et d'Action

(CRUA). In the spring of 1954, twenty-two men met secretly in the rue de Chartres in Algiers to create the CRUA.<sup>6</sup> Nine of the men associated with this meeting eventually earned the title of 'historic chiefs': Muhammad Boudyaf, Mustafa Ben Boul'leed, Mourad Didouh, Al-'Arabi Ben Mehadi, Belkasim Kareem, Rabi'h Bitat, Hussein Ait Ahmad, Ben Bella and Muhammad Kheidar. The three last-named were fellow conspirators although in Cairo at the time. The meeting decided on a date for the revolution and began the work of organization by dividing Algeria into different Wilayat. Thus, the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN) was born.

The first tract of the FLN made clear that the Front was totally independent of the two factions of Messali and the central committee. In this regard it emphasized that,

We wish to make it quite clear that we are completely independent of either of the two factions which are struggling for power. According to true revolutionary principles, we place the interests of our nation above petty and misguided personal disputes or considerations of prestige. Our only enemy is the hostile and blind colonialism which has always rejected our demands for freedom, when presented by peaceful means.

We consider we are justified in presenting our new movement under the title: Front de Liberation Nationale. We hope thereby to avoid association with any particular group, and to provide all Algerian patriots, from all social levels and from all truly Algerian parties and movements, with an opportunity of joining in the fight for freedom, unhampered by any conflict of loyalty.

The young revolutionary populists of the FLN wanted to preserve the unity of the Algerian people, an idea which, according to Boudyaf, "obsessed them".<sup>8</sup> They wanted to rid the Front of the cult of personality that had developed around Messali. Disillusion with Messali's authoritarian rule explained the careful preparations the third force made to ensure collective leadership of the Algerian Revolution. The FLN wanted to narrow the scope of action to Algeria and to concentrate above all on obtaining national independence. The radical Algerian national ideology demanded total independence and absolute sovereignty for Algeria. The broad outline of the FLN's political programme indicated that the aim of the Algerian Revolution was national independence by restoring the sovereign, democratic Algerian state within the framework of the principles of Islam. In order to avoid misinterpretation, the programme specified that

To show our sincere desire for peace, and to avoid unnecessary bloodshed and loss of life, we suggest honourable negotiations to the French authorities if they are willing to act in good faith and accept once and for all the right of the peoples they rule to self-determination and to recognize the Algerian nation by an official declaration abrogating all edicts, decrees and laws which make Algeria French soil in the teeth of her history, geography, language, religion and customs.

The revolutionary populists argued that, under colonialism, justice, democracy and equality were but bait and illusion. They appealed to the indigenous masses to reconquer their freedom at the price of their blood. The first tract of the Revolution which appeared in various parts of Algeria in November 1, 1954, emphasized that "God is with the fighter of just causes, and no force can stop them now, save glorious death or

national liberation." Fanon proclaimed that the revolutionary leadership found that if it wanted to prevent the people from being gripped by terror it had no choice but to adopt forms of terror which until then it had rejected. In other words, he believed that the revolutionary populists were forced to use force and violent means against the French. He specified that

The decision to kill a civilian in the street is not an easy one, and no-one comes to it lightly. No-one takes the step of placing a bomb in a public place without a battle of conscience. Yet the rebels were forced to use terror. They were not born as terrorists. On the contrary, they were all reformist.<sup>10</sup>

#### Notes

1. Gillespie, 1960, 75
2. La Nation Algérienne, no 2, 10 September 1954
3. Zagoria, 1973, 303
4. Harbi, 1975, 148
5. Gillespie, 1960, 84
6. The twenty-two men who established the CRUA were: 1. Mustafa Ben Boul'feed 2. Muhammad Soudyaf 3. Al-'Arabi Ben Mehadi 4. Mourad Didoush 5. Rabi' Sitat 6. Al Zobiar Ibn 'Adjadj 7. 'Uthman Ibn Bal' Yazeed 8. Muhammad Marzouki 9. Ahmad Sha'h 10. Bou Djim'a Souwedani 11. 'Abd Al Hafiz Bou Souf 12. Hadj Ibn 'Ali 13. 'Abd Al Malik Ramadan 14. Ibn 'Awda Ibn Mustafa 15. Al Akhdar Ibn Tobal 16. Youssef Zakout 17. Mukhtar Baddji 18. Muhammad Nashti 19. 'Abd Al Salam Habashi 20. Rasheed Malah 21. Sa'eed Bou 'Ali 22. 'Abd Al Kader Al 'Amoudi.
7. Bajjawi, 1971, 22
8. Le Monde, 2 November 1962
9. FLN, 1954
10. Fanon, 1970, 40

## 8. CONCLUSION

Although the ENA was established by the Communists in order to infiltrate the North African emigrants in France, it turned out to be their first nationalist organization. The rejection of the reformist demands presented to the Popular Front in February 1936 pushed the nationalists to extremism in the sense that they thereafter abandoned the legal and legitimate methods and believed in total independence and absolute sovereignty instead of demanding some concessions within the Colonial System. The radical nationalists wanted all the Algerians, irrespective of race or religion, to unite against French Colonialism and struggle jointly for the total liberation of Algeria. They concluded that liberty could never be given, but only taken by force. The emancipation of Algeria could not be realized without the organization and the education of the Algerian masses.

The radical nationalists proceeded to form a para-military force, the Organisation Spéciale (OS), who from 1947 to 1950 collected arms, trained recruits, and planned a strategy for the eventual take-over of Algeria. The MTLB Congress in 1953 resulted in the split of the Party and the emergence of the revolutionary populists who were alienated by the dispute between Messali and the Central Committee. They decided to reject these two factions and establish the Revolutionary Committee for Unity and Action (the CRUA). This in turn led to the formation of the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) which started the Algerian Revolution on 1 November 1954.

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